(b) if so, the development plan of the field for early exploration?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH GANGWAR): (a) and (b) Cairn Energy India Ltd., a Scottish company, has made a third hydrocarbon discovery in October 2001 in KG-DWN-98/ 2, a New Exploration Licencing Policy (NELP)-I Block, in Krishna Godavari basin, off the coast of Andhra Pradesh. The discoveries need further appraisal in order to establish their commerciality for the development plans to be drawn up.

Lowering of Natural Gas Prices

1621. SHRI RAJNATH SINGH 'SURYA': Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to bring natural gas prices to import parity by April, 2002;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether it is a fact that India does not import natural gas; and

(d) if so, the justification for increasing prices of these gases?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH GANGWAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The main reasons are as under:—

(i) To augment the indigenous supply by increasing the indigenous exploration and production and also to import natural gas/liquefied natural gas (LNG) to meet the growing demand for Hydrocarbons and to bridge the wide gap between the demand and supply of natural gas in the country.

(ii) Huge investments needed by Oil India Limited and Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited to maintain the aging fields and also to increase indigenous exploration of gas under high risk.

(iii) To bring about parity with the Joint Venture Companies producing gas who are being paid 100 per cent fuel oil parity price.

(iv) Prices of imported gas/LNG at International rate being substantially higher than the domestic gas.

(v) To avert dual price system for domestic and imported gas.

(vi) Market driven prices being charged by the private producers of gas.

(vii) To curb the increasing disparity between gas price and other alternate fuels like Naphtha and fuel oil.

(c) Currently, there is no import of natural gas/LNG. However, there are various initiatives both public and private, who are in process to import natural gas and LNG to India.

(d) Does not arise in view of (c) above.

Inclusion of cancelled agencies under Kargil Scheme

1622. SHRI YADLAPATI VENKAT RAO: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it has been decided to include petrol pumps and LPG distributorship allotted in 1993—96 and cancelled by High Court and later cancellation upheld by Supreme Court, as part of Kargil Scheme; and

(b) if so, the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH GANGWAR): (a) and (b) The Government have a proposal to explore the possibility of allotment of the retail outlet dealerships and LPG distributorships, allotted under the discretionary quota earlier and subsequently cancelled by the Delhi High Court, the cancellation of which has since been upheld by the Supreme Court, to the beneficiaries of the Special Scheme for widows/next of kin of Defence personnel killed in action in "OP Vijay" (Kargil).

Indo-Iran Gas Project

1623. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the present status of the dollar 4.5 billion Indo-Iranian gas pipeline project on which both the countries had entered into a preliminary agreement;

(b) whether feasibility studies in respect of the gas pipeline project have since been carried out and if so, the details thereof;

(c) if the answer to part (b) above be in the negative, the reasons therefor; and